

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Salute to Justice O'Connor

In these days of partisan rancor, pundits and elected officials don't often cross party lines to salute the achievements of those on the other side of the aisle. But although I am a Democrat, I must thank Sandra Day O'Connor for her service and her courage.

While everyone else is speculating on her replacement, I want to congratulate my fellow Stanford Law School alum on her thoughtful, tempered and graceful 24-year tenure as the Supreme Court's first female justice. While I do not agree with every opinion she rendered, I am grateful for her willingness to break from the Republican Party line to do what she thought was right — preserving the separation of church and state, limiting the death penalty, curbing overzealous law enforcement that infringes on individual rights and carefully considering the effect that recent national security practices have on civil liberties.

Most notably, she has bravely protected a woman's fundamental right of choice, and she has done so against intense pressure from conservatives.

Justice O'Connor was also a pioneer in the successful effort to prove that women deserve a place in the halls of justice just as much as men do. She could have been more supportive of affirmative action, freedom of expression and the need to spend public education dollars on public schools instead of private schools. She also could have allowed the 2000 Florida election recount to go forward. But in the end, her legacy as a tough but practical jurist sets a standard for men and women alike.

Whoever Justice O'Connor's successor may be,



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he or she would do well to imitate her independence, moderation and care.

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